

AKIYAMA! "Champion DOWN! Champion DOWN!"- and other stuff I saw and heard about this week!

Howdy!

I got a bitchin tape from m'man Phil, with lots of cool stuff on it so I figured I'd tell y'all about it.

-I saw a bunch of All Japan TV. I'm guessing it was from May or June because Taue defended the Triple Crown against Kawada, but I could be wrong. I think they took the belt off ol' Akira because he is can't consistently deliver the great matches, because this one was kind of lacklustre, and great matches against Kawada should be a given. I think Kawada is a great but this wasn't all that it should have been. I think its because Taue has too many goofy spots that he does, like that leg lift thing where he wrenches the head of his opponent. Kawada has that dopey "little kicks to the head" spot that is pretty goofy, but he has so many other things to take your mind off of it (like kicking the f*uck out of his opponent:)), so it doesn't hurt him as much. Kobashi has that Minami Toyota rolling on the ground thing that is pretty goofy but he is twice the wrestling machine that these two are, so I'm guessing that is why he has the hardware, trophies and certificates. Taue wins the "Most Stoic" award over anyone in All Japan, which is his coolest aspect. I am actually starting to really dig Akira Taue, and that is a lot easier to do when he isn't wearing the Triple Crown when there are guys who can wrestle circles around him, like Kobashi.

-Saw two Misawa/Akyama tagteams. The first one was the best, against Doctor Death and Johnny Ace. Steve Williams looks like he is back in wrestling form and Ace just rules. Ace really rocked in this match. His Ace Crusher looks so much cooler than DDP's. It's hard to believe that he was a Dynamic Dude at one time in his life. What is that suplex that Akyama kept doing called? It's a variation of a Northern Lights Suplex kinda. The best part of the match was when Akyama and Ace were pretty much wrestling a singles match for seven or eight minutes with Williams and Misawa outside beating the heck out of each other but always running the ring to make the save at the last minute out of nowhere. Misawa wasn't afraid to take every bump imaginable as All Japan moves deeply into the state of never having a suplex that doesn't drive the recipient directly on his head.:) Thus, it must really suck when Doc is doing the suplexing. This was one of the better matches I've seen in a long while.

The second was Misawa/Akyama vs Kobashi/Diet. Diet is very old school pro style and looks like a rangy Texan type. He did a cool released Niagra driver. Kobashi stole the show as expected and Misawa did a lot of elbows and generally ruled. I'm guessing Akyama is one of the young punks that will be moving up the ladder as Kobashi takes the next step and is leaving a place vacant, as he was quite impressive, working as stiff as his elders and not being smoked completely by Kobashi and Misawa (unlike that six man tag with Van Damme I saw a few weeks ago). Diet seemed young and to have a lot of potential, and he could easily be stolen back to the United States for the big two.

- I finally saw Skydiving J yesterday and there was tons that ruled! To HELL WITH IT! I'm going on record as saying that Michinoku Pro Cruiserweights are better, man for man, than New Japan Cruiserweights! They smoked them on this night in terms of innovation, bumps taken and matches delivered. TAKA Michinoku and Super Delfin had the match of the night as TAKA really pulled out the stops including a springboard plancha from one top rope to a catty-corner top rope that had me rewinding a couple of dozen times. I don't know what I was thinking when I thought that Delfin was overrated! The last three matches I've seen him in have been absolutely great! And he definitely had the hippest mask on earth. It was kinda burgundy and earth tone. Very Stylish! TAKA pulled off one of his fabulous TAKA drivers (or Michinoku Special #2, or whatever!:) and took it to the mat and to the air with equal intensity. THIS GUY WHIPS ASS! He has passed Sasuke as the best wrestler in Michinoku Pro and is closing in on the divine Gran Naniwa as my personal favorite.

The Liger/Dick Togo match was, despite reports to the contrary, pretty choice. Liger was great as an absolute prick, and did a Fargo Strut better than JJ or even our man Stevie! The big surprise for me was handsome Dick Togo. I had never seen him before and somebody told me that he was actually a repackaged Terry Boy or Shiryu. He came out with Shiryu and he didn't look like Terry Boy, so I don't know. He was not afraid to take a bump- my favorite being Togo trying a ring apron hurricanrana and Liger turning it into a powerbomb onto the floor to a very sickening thud. Togo got way too much elevation on it for any sane man to get, knowing that he is about to eat a lot of floor. All through it, Togo made Liger's already impressive power moves look twice as hellish, especially the top-rope Fisherman buster after the missed Togo senton (which was after he had made two of them.) Liger was great and Togo was impressive, if not in Liger's league yet.

The Sasuke/Black Tiger match was pretty grounded which would have been fine with me if it hadn't been so slow in large portions. Eddie was really aggressive and I'm starting to like him more as Black Tiger in the ring than his stateside version, I'm just wondering if there is some way to translate it into his stateside persona. Sasuke was intense enough but it was pretty flat overall. They would never succumb to the Lucha leanings that each have, which would have been a great addition to the sometimes clumsy submission stuff, and would have really been cool to see someone with Sasuke's ring speed with someone who is a master of the style. I guess they were trying to stay within the New Japan Junior's style, and that limited the range of what these two could do between the ropes. The end was the exact one as Misterio/Psicosis at BatB, Hurricanrana out of a DieHard Kansai, so I'm guessing our AAA fellas watch tapes (unlike WCW announcers).

The Ohtani/Kazushi Sakuraba was pretty great. It was your basic "UWFi guy doesn't work with the New Japan guy on pro style stuff, so New Japan guy whips his ass shoot style" and Ohtani is the master of this and tears Sakuraba a new one. TAKA and Ohtani are becoming the most versatile wrestlers in the world, not unlike budding Benois, with TAKA having the lead because he can work Lucha style and I've never seen Ohtani try to work that style. They can both work UWFi and New Japan Junior styles. I read that Yamamoto was hurt and couldn't do the match, but this was probably the same match, without the bleached hair. Sakuraba was as impressive

as all the young guys in UWFi are with all the cool snap suplexes and stiff kicks. Ohtani hits a beautiful dragon suplex but goes for the submission instead of bridging for the pin, sort of like Takaiwa when he does a Boston Crab for the submission after he hits the totally disabling Death Valley Driver (a New Japan Young Punk trend!)

The rest was short highlights, the highlights of the highlights being: Takaiwa dickishly Death Valley Driving Gran Hamada.(HEY! C'MON HE'S OLD!) but doing the job for Hamada anyway (it is Hamada. You wouldn't have a job if it weren't for him selling the Junior Hvywt style to the public years ago, ya punk!:) The highlights of the Naniwa/Dragon match looked cool, though I read that the match sucked. I'd like to decide for myself though.

The lowlight was the divine Shiryu jobbing to the pretty useless Moteji. Oh well, at least Moteji has won a match that has reached the States.:) Shiryu's new mask kicks ass, and the highlights showed some impressive highspots, though Shiryu didn't land on his feet during that weird tope thing he does and there wasn't enough to capture the intensity that Shiryu has been reaching in his last couple of matches.

The end set up this months tournaments with everybody throwing all their belts in a pile in the middle of the ring and agreeing to unification tournament. If it is for one unified title, they should do the great thing and have the champion carry around all eight belts at once after he wins, like the Triple Crown holder does with those three belts.

-Phil gave me a Silver King/Texacano vs Super Astro/Miguel Perez Jr match from IWA, and Silver King and Super Astro combined to show the origins of a lot of moves that are being gotten over by Misterio in WCW. Astro is best chubby guy in wrestling, though SATO would take him to the limit in the ring and at the buffet line.:)

-I got a big batch of ECW I hadn't seen from Saint Phil :). Too Cold Scorpio is the best wrestler at ECW and he should be wrestling worldwide. He carried the adequately talented Shane Douglas and the psychologyless Sabu each to Match of the year Candidate this year. Notice how much was Too Cold in the Douglas match and you will see that Douglas is working his ass off and Too Cold is making his spots look spectacular (especially the sling shot suplex onto the guard rail.) Scorpio can make a good wrestler look great and can settle a great but disorganized wrestler down to the point of creating a great match as opposed to one filled with just highspots. If Scorpio was in a bigger organization right now he would be recognized as being in the list of top twenty workers in the world. And Sabu is developing a sense of psychology. I noticed this in the Stevie Richards match, where it worked back and forth in a logical sequence and built to a coherent ending. Of course, that could have been Richards, but I'm giving Mr. Brunk the benefit of the doubt.

The best wrestler I can't stand watching is Rob Van Damme. I don't understand it. He is great here and in Japan and has been in some of the best matches I've seen this and last year. His match against Sabu (the second one, I think, is the one I saw yesterday) was flawless with the exception of one overselling of a Sabu punch. That was pretty much what ECW would want to

be known for, hardcore but more real wrestling than you would ever want; a really different style that straddles mainstream and Japanese garbage wrestling, kind of like if all the WCW cruiserweights watched way too many Terry Funk matches. It was a perfect mix. Maybe with Van Damme I just can't stand that pony tail or something, or his goofy unnecessary gymnastic embellishments. I need to get over it, because he is great. I saw a match on Wrestling Power 96 where he carried Gorgeous George III to a *** star match on an independent card, so I got a clue there. Add that to the Kroffat match I saw him in last year and he is developing an impressive resume, and his style is pretty unique.

The Luna Vachon/Stevie Richards cage match was great. Vachon should be picked up by WCW and they should have her be the #1 heel in a Women's division. Her and Medusa could be conduits for bringing in Japanese counterparts. I'm also thinking that GAEA wrestlers would be a better fit for the states than any other group, in that Chigusa has a better grasp of the heel/face structure than her Japanese counterparts, and Vachon would be able to hang with Chigusa easier than having to hang with Inoue or Minami level wrestlers (God knows Medusa can't). Plus Vachon/Combat vs Medusa/Chigusa would go over in the States better than anything else I could think of. Vachon was impressive and she should be in a ring more often. The testicular claw was absolutely brilliant!

The Sandman/Whipwreck ladder series was truly impressive. The Sandman was the best I've seen him and for some reason Mikey was eternally a non-entity. He would do all these things that would be impressive, but the presence of Sandman totally overshadowed him; Mikey became another person being beaten to death by Sandman who somehow won the third match. I think that is the allure of Sandman. his ring presence is undeniably, you can't look away. I saw all three and they smoke the Micheals/Ramone series like a cheap cigar. Sandman's leg drop off from the rafters, the insane plancha by Sandman on to the ladder as it was draped over the security rail and the great interviews by Steve Austin before every match were all amazing, a true pinnacle for that type of match.

The Gangstas/Dreamer vs Eliminators/Brian Lee match was AWESOME! The Eliminators are WAY TOO talented for such big men. Tommy Dreamer has gone from being the Kanemura of the US to becoming the Nakamaki of the US, so he is going more laterally than forward, but he has made some progress. The Kronos flying space Tiger Drop made my day! These guys are Cruiserweights trapped in heavyweight bodies! I was disappointed that Prime Time Brian Lee didn't come out to "Train, Train" by Blackfoot, but he brawls with best of them. This IWA deal should be a godsend for Dreamer, who should fit in snug like a bug in a rug.

- I saw the Rey/Juventud cage match from AAA television and it rocked. REASON #1328932 to be a Juventudiac: The first move by Juventud was that Akyama suplex that I didn't know the name of up there. Mexican cage matches are the best in the world because everything happens on top of the cage and they always end up climbing overtop of each other to get out like people would end up doing in real life.:) The ending was anticlimatic but the rest of the match made up for it. Juventud's rolling Guillotine legdrop from the top of the cage was pretty choice.

-Saw the Konan/Psicosis match on the Pro this morning. Hey Dusty, you fat piece of sh*t, if you don't think Psicosis is tough enough, I have a barbwire cage match from Tijuana with Psicosis and Halloween beating the crap out of Leon Negro and Ultraman 2000. And he can also jump off the ground which you definately couldn't do, you fat useless nothing.

Next week: Dean get's tapes of Rey Misterio Sr's WWO from Dams and watches all of it in one sitting! It may not be for the weak of heart!

NANIWA!